

A THREE YEARS' EXPERIMENT IN POULTRY
HUSBANDRY.

Edwin A. Chambers.

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A THREE YEARS EXPERIENCE IN POULTRY HUSBANDRY:

By Edwin A. Chambers.

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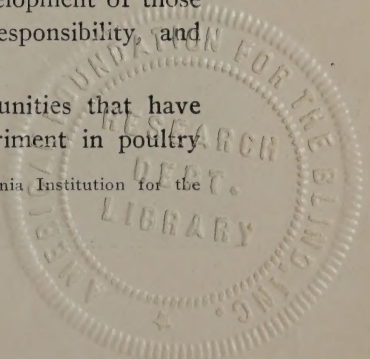
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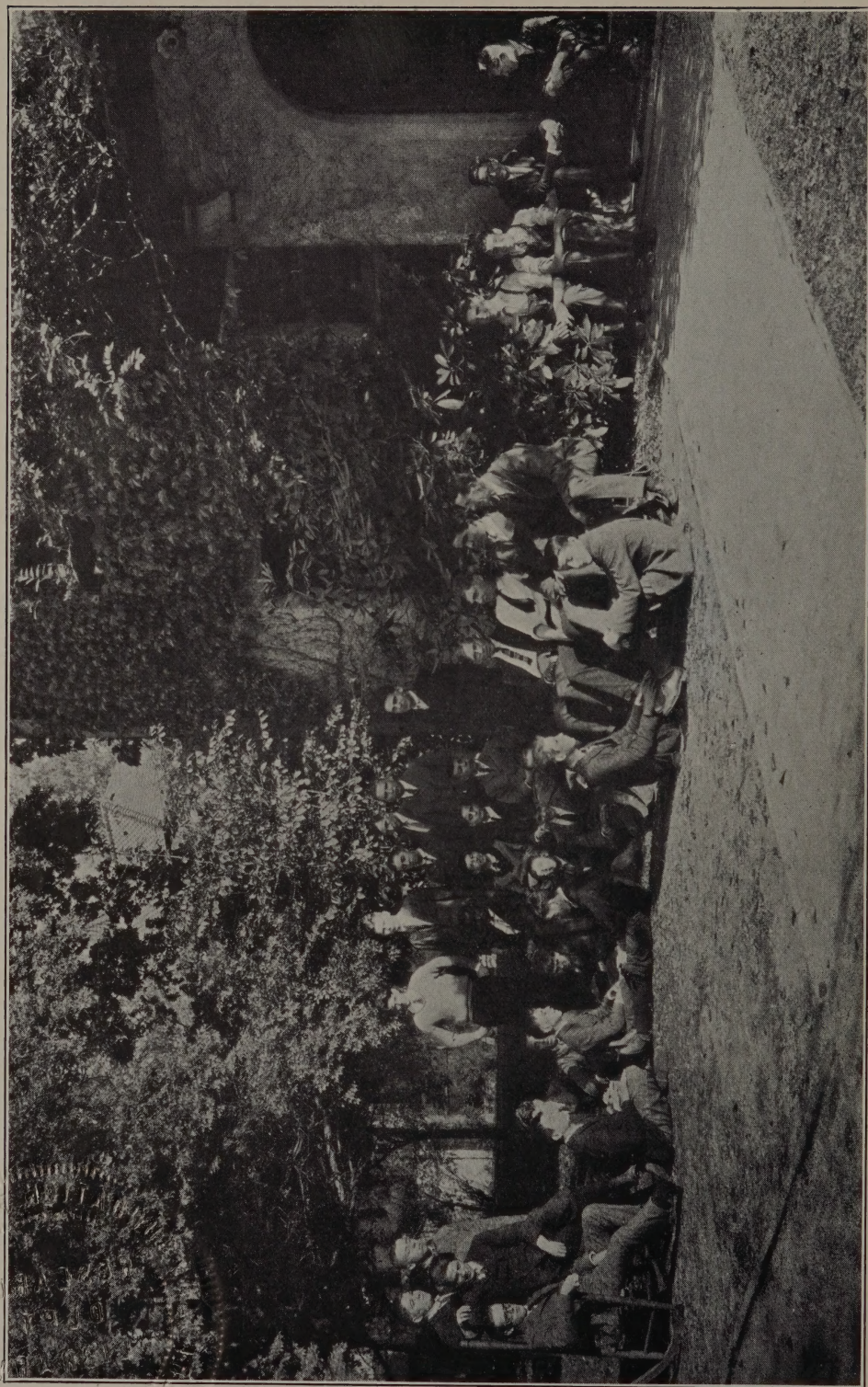
Our instructor in Elementary Science and Poultry Husbandry, Mr. Chambers, presented at the Convention of the American Association of Instructors of the Blind held at the Perkins Institution this summer the "Story of a Three Years' Experiment in the Development of a Small Poultry Plant in a School for the Blind" which is being made a part of this report. In this "story" Mr. Chambers has brought out the essential facts and the purposes which have governed us in the development of this little poultry plant. For the fiscal year extending from October 1, 1923, to September 30, 1924, the poultry husbandry department shows a net operating profit slightly in excess of 20% on the investment, including charges of 6% interest on the actual cost of plant and equipment, 5% depreciation on the houses and yards, and 10% depreciation on the equipment. These figures do not, of course, include the salary of the instructor, which is charged against the added income from the increased number of pupils accommodated by utilizing the hospital building as a cottage for ten senior boys.

Mr. Chambers shows the educational value of a poultry plant in a school for the blind. Attention should be directed and emphasis given to the fact that while such an enterprise as has been entered upon in the development of this small poultry plant provides good general educational material, it has specific value for totally blind and nearly blind boys in a residential school in enlarging their very restricted interests and in providing opportunities for the development of responsibility. One of the most serious weaknesses of our present day residential school education for blind children is disregard of the importance of providing ways and means for the development of responsibility. We do too completely all the thinking and planning for our girls and boys. So thoroughly do we plan for the direction and supervision of their activities in and out of the schoolroom that they are seldom permitted to make a choice between two or more lines of action. We learn by our mistakes and mistakes can be made only when choices are possible. Anything, therefore, that can be done should be done to develop in our pupils responsibility and initiative. A small, carefully developed poultry plant is only one of several means to this end. We would like to begin a half dozen different new enterprises that will provide interests for every girl and boy in the school and aid in the development of those qualities so essential for success in life—initiative, responsibility, and self-reliance.

Particularly gratifying, therefore, are the opportunities that have been afforded by the development of this small experiment in poultry.

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Poultry group and their instructor

husbandry. No less gratifying is it, in view of our financial circumstances, that we have found a plan by which the experiment is rapidly paying for itself.

O. H. BURRITT, *Principal*.

A THREE YEARS' EXPERIMENT IN POULTRY HUSBANDRY

At the beginning of the school year 1921-1922 a few of the boys and their instructor took over the small flock of chickens housed near the Hospital Building, now used as a Cottage for older boys, as a start in the work of poultry husbandry.

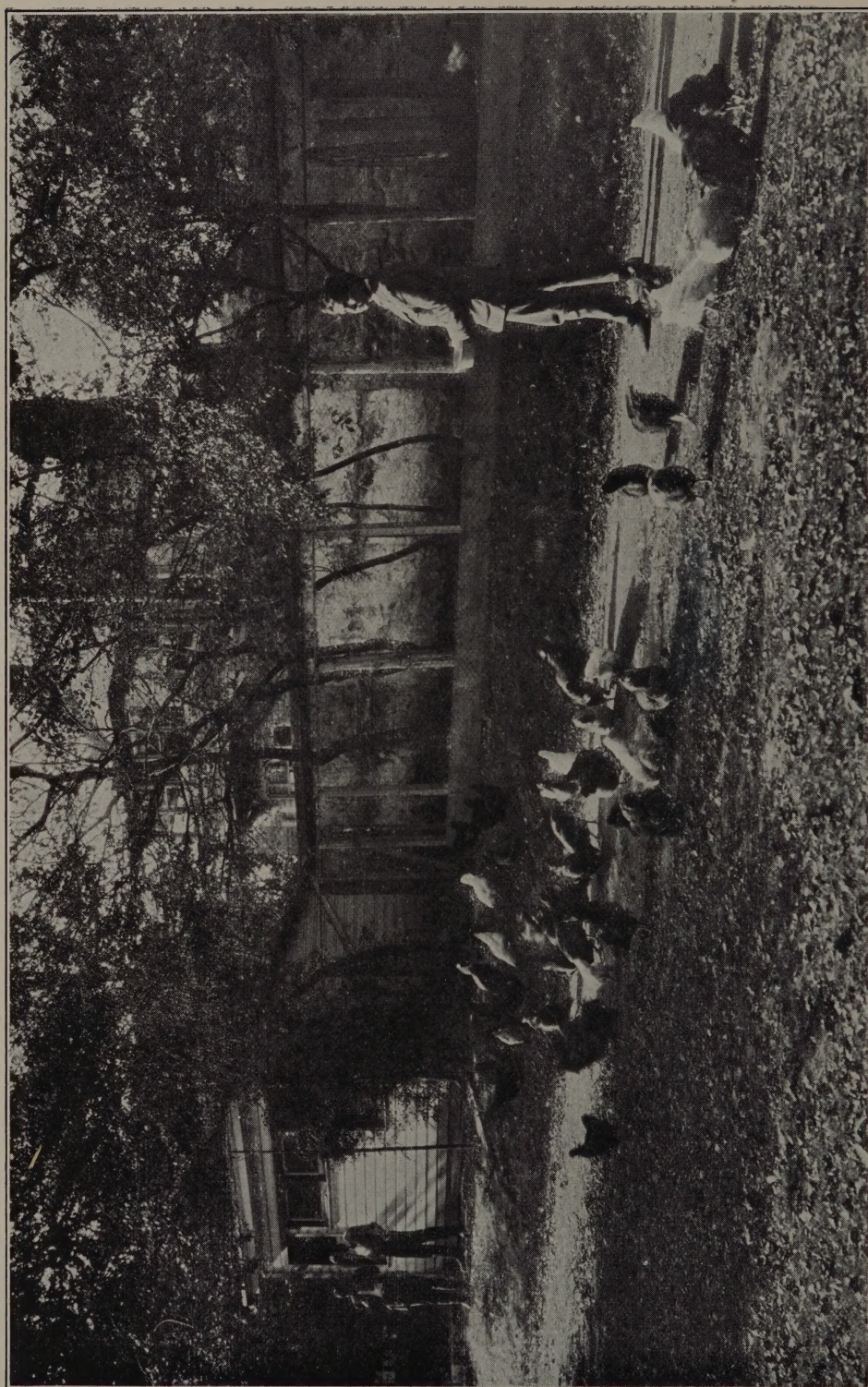
Utilizing the practice with this flock as a nucleus of experience we set about a program of slow, cautious expansion of the poultry plant with certain definite objectives in view. These objectives were two-fold—practical and cultural. Believing that poultry keeping would be a practicable and profitable vocation for certain blind people and a worth-while avocation for many others, we desired to provide practice for our boys which should impart to them a working knowledge of plant construction and equipment, stock selection and management, and marketing. Furthermore, poultry keeping appeared to offer splendid opportunity for the development, among our pupils, of teamwork, leadership, initiative, business ability, and socialization through contacts with a retail market outside the school. Perhaps most important of all, it seemed to promise a practicum wherein should develop clean, normal impressions of the delicate phenomena of sex and reproduction. Our objectives thus included an added contribution to vocational training, development of responsibility and new interests, contact with outside people, and enrichment of the course of study.

With these objectives before us and bearing in mind that failure and loss threaten the headlong among poultry keepers, we commenced designing and building plant additions. The boys, both the totally blind and those with partial sight, took an active working part in the construction of new houses and yards. Classroom instruction, reading and discussion pertaining to the various phases of poultry keeping supplemented the practical work. Obviously this theoretical aspect of the course was of great value in tending to minimize costly errors outside.

Because it offered less practical obstacles and because there was an immediate fancy market for the product literally at our door, we chose egg production as the aim and are still confining ourselves to this alone.

We felt a leaning toward the central laying house plan of operation because of its economy of labor and materials but, after visualizing our special local conditions, we actually built portable, separate-flock houses of both 100 and 200 square feet floor area.

The building procedure has been necessarily slow and progressive, in order that the boys might take actual part in it and yet have poultry to handle as soon as possible. Since the spring of 1922 we have constructed three one-flock houses, each accommodating from 25 to 35 birds, and two two-unit houses for 50 to 75 laying hens each. The standard of excellence in construction was kept high. Thus these houses were relatively expensive. Including the runs which accompanied them, the five houses, providing seven units, cost \$792.16, exclusive of labor cost. Equal practical value could be realized at a much lower figure than this and would be justified by a less prominent location than ours, which is



Feeding Time



Feeding the flock of White Leghorns and gathering the eggs

in the heart of a better-class urban residential section. Equipment for these houses cost \$115.38, including brooder stove and hover which is still adequate for our needs.

We have Single Comb White Leghorn stock which we bought day-old and brooded ourselves, and a flock of Rhode Island Reds. The Leghorns are our mainstays and are handled so as to produce sterile eggs. The Reds constitute a breeding flock which produces hen-raised chicks and serves to furnish the reproduction lessons. The Reds were chosen because of their greater domesticity and brooding excellence.

There is real enthusiasm and rivalry in the plant management, carried on entirely by teams of boys, with the instructor acting merely in an advisory capacity. One boy is responsible for each house to the captain of his team. The captain records all data and oversees the conduct of his team. In order that the interest may be sustained in as large a group as possible, each team serves but a week at a time. The personnel of the team rotates in such manner that each member becomes captain in his turn and each boy handles a different flock each week his team serves. Here we sacrifice continuity of effort and experience in order to maintain interest within a larger group. The boys market their eggs in the vicinity of the school at the fancy price. None of the eggs is over twenty-four hours old when delivered.

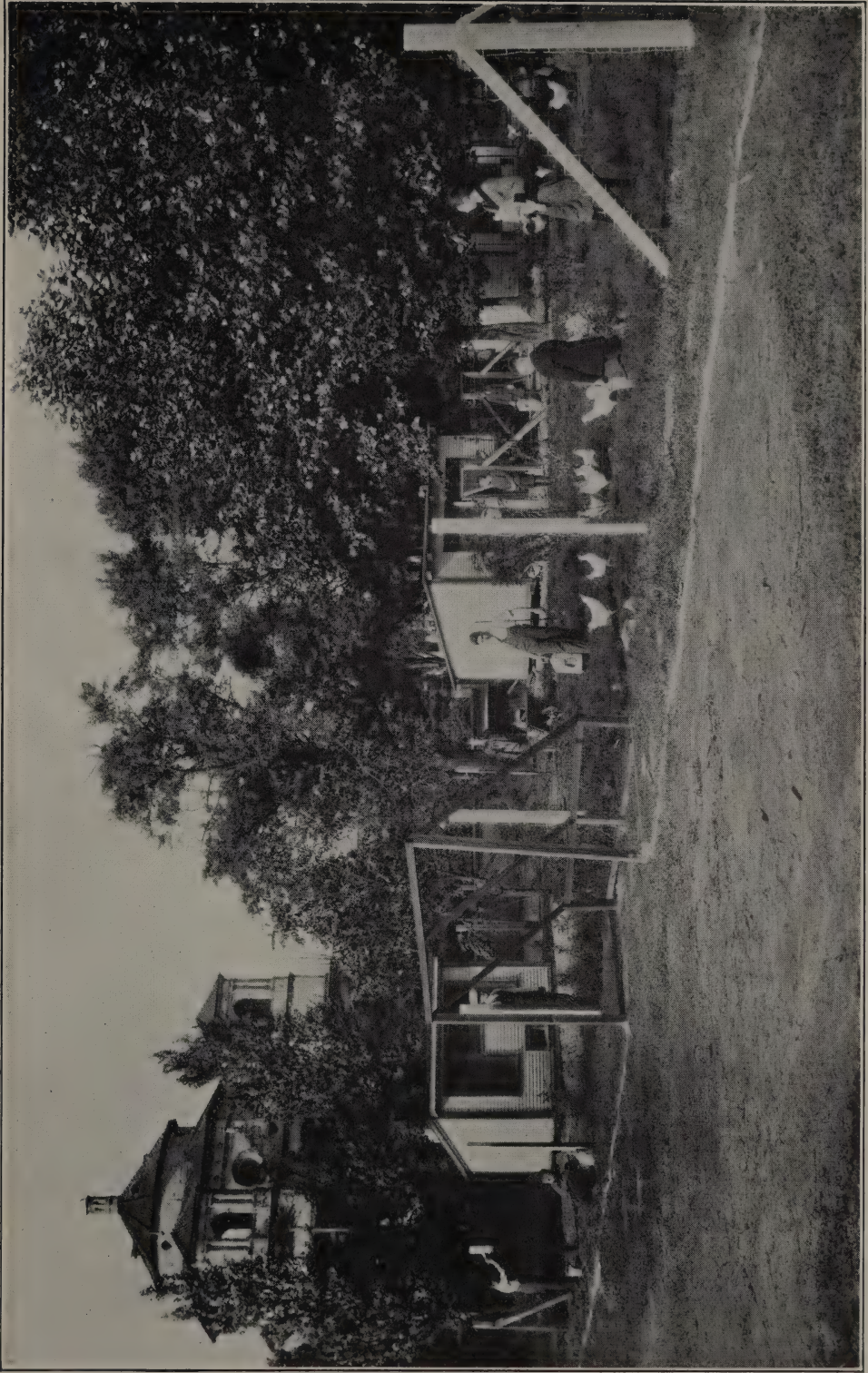
Our market was unsolicited and, without advertising, the strictly local demand for the eggs has grown to proportions which much exceed our product.

As yet we do not have a profit sharing plan. The income is credited against our total outlay. As soon as our profits have reimbursed us for the cost of buildings and equipment, or perhaps sooner, we intend to inaugurate some plan by means of which our boys may profit by their labors.

One of the most gratifying aspects of this experiment is the sustained interest. All the chicken chores are done during the scant free time remaining after a rather exacting school schedule has been met. There is actual competition for the privilege of remaining during the summer vacation months to carry on the poultry work.

Probably some little aid from some one with sight is necessary if a totally blind person is to succeed in poultry keeping. Yet, after having watched blind boys of relatively irresponsible age handle the exacting details of poultry care these three years, we feel almost justified in believing that to some of them this need of aid is almost negligible. To illustrate: Last summer I had four well grown White Leghorn cockerels remaining alone in a large run and wished them transferred to a house nearer our cottage. With us at the time were two older boys who had some sight. As an experiment I asked them to bring the cockerels over. After half an hour they returned crestfallen to report their failure. Knowing it had been a rather large order, since these birds were very active and it was mid-afternoon, I showed no displeasure and promptly forgot the errand. Ten minutes later a totally blind lad of fourteen, who had heard from the other boys of their effort, appeared with two cockerels under each arm and asked me what to do with them. I did not inquire as to his technique; the accomplishment seemed quite sufficient.

We have been very fortunate as regards mortality among the fowls and our little plant of some 200 laying hens is fast paying for its home. Our first day-old chicks reached us March 12, 1923. Nineteen months



Boys and their instructor at work with the poultry

later over half of our total outlay had been returned to us in eggs and broilers.

We are still experimenting, have yet much to learn, but we are pleased with the results of our poultry keeping and I believe each of my "crew of chicken raisers" at Overbrook would join me in saying that we like it and feel that it keeps us profitably occupied during our spare time.

Following is a report of our experiment as of September 30, 1924, and a financial statement of our operation during the fiscal year October 1, 1923, to September 30, 1924.

REPORT OF POULTRY HUSBANDRY

MARCH 12, 1923-SEPTEMBER 30, 1924

Operating Income:		
Cash receipts, eggs and poultry.....	\$903.79	
Operating Cost:		
Stock: 425 day-old chicks.....	\$83.75	
Feed: Total to October 1, 1924.....	643.69	
Expendable supplies	65.77	
	<u>793.21</u>	
Operating Gain		\$107.58
Inventory Valuation:		
Houses and yards—cost basis.....	\$792.16	
Equipment	115.38	
Stock—172 pullets @ \$3.00.....	516.00	
Incidental: 75 bags @ .05.....	3.75	
Feed on hand.....	20.00	
Coal on hand.....	3.00	
	<u>\$1,450.29</u>	
Total Cash Outlay:		
Houses and yards.....	\$792.16	
Equipment	115.38	
	<u>\$907.54</u>	
Less operating gain.....	107.58	
	<u>799.96</u>	
Net Gain		\$650.33
FISCAL YEAR OCTOBER 1, 1923-SEPTEMBER 30, 1924		
Income:		
Eggs, broilers, feed bags.....	\$775.61	
Expense:		
Feed	\$476.56	
Supplies	41.77	
150 day-old chicks.....	27.00	
Charge off on account of Interest and Depreciation:		
Houses and yard, 11% (6% and 5%).....	\$87.14	
Equipment, 16% (6% and 10%).....	10.93	
	<u>98.07</u>	
	<u>643.40</u>	
*Net Operating Profit.....		\$132.21

* Profit of 20 per cent. plus on investment.

Respectfully submitted,

EDWIN A. CHAMBERS, *Instructor.*

October 1, 1924.

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